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Preservation Resources

Reviews

***Idealists, Scoundrels, and the Lady: An Insider's View of the Statue of Liberty-Ellis Island Project*, by F. Ross Holland. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993. xix + 266 p. \$39.95.**

Reviewed by Barry Mackintosh, Bureau Historian, National Park Service.

Partnerships between the National Park Service and the private sector, the subject of much recent emphasis, are nothing new. The provision of visitor accommodations and services by concessioners was authorized in the 1872 act making Yellowstone the first national park and was aggressively advanced by the Service's founding fathers. A partnership promoted the bureau's birth in 1916: Stephen T. Mather solicited contributions from 17 western railroads for *The National Parks Portfolio*, a lavish publication sent to congressmen and influential citizens to win support for the legislation creating

the NPS. Among notable philanthropic partners, the Rockefeller and Mellon families have donated millions over the years for park lands and improvements.

Notwithstanding these precedents, the Statue of Liberty-Ellis Island project of the last decade marked the first substantial use of private money to restore major properties in NPS custody. *Idealists, Scoundrels, and the Lady* is Ross Holland's first-hand account of this pioneering partnership. Holland, a former NPS historian and associate director for cultural resources management, retired in 1983 to become director of restoration and preservation for the Statue of Liberty-Ellis Island Foundation. While there he kept a taped diary, which with key documents and personal interviews formed the basis for his book.

The foundation was one of several bodies collaborating with the Service to plan, finance, and execute the massive job of restoring the badly deteriorated Statue of Liberty for its centennial in 1986. Related projects included redevelopment of the rest of Liberty Island, restoration of the derelict main building on Ellis Island, and new museums on the two islands interpreting the history of the statue and American immigration. Given the complexities of the resources and the tasks, the mandate to complete work on the statue in time for a four-day extravaganza centered on July 4, 1986, and the differing views of the disparate parties involved, it is not surprising that all did not go smoothly.

A French-American committee responsible for design work foundered, as did a corporation licensed to sell commemorative objects made from discarded parts of the statue. Lee Iacocca lost favor with the Reagan administration and was dismissed as chairman of the commission planning the centennial celebration. A congressional committee and the General Accounting Office investigated alleged improprieties within and between the foundation and the NPS. Architects, corporate representatives, politicians, fund-raisers, and bureaucrats bickered. Amid all the acrimony, Holland's scoundrels seemed destined to prevail over his idealists.

Yet the foundation ultimately managed to raise more than \$350 million, and the resulting work was deservedly acclaimed. "Since the project accomplished its mission and the statue's virtue was not injured," Holland concludes, "the public-private cooperation, as reflected in this project, has to be listed in the success column, and it could work in another project, if the mistakes of this project are guarded against and the lessons learned are taken to heart." Those considering future private-sector partnerships of anything approaching this scale would do well to read his book and heed his advice.

***Landmark American Bridges*, by Eric DeLony. American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE), 1993. I-VIII + 150, Bibliography, Index, 128 illustrations.**

Reviewed by Richard Sanders Allen, research consultant in Lewiston, ID, and 1992 ASCE History and Heritage Award recipient.

Most Americans are apathetic about bridges and simply cross them as they come to them. There is a great lack of awareness concerning these utilitarian, but highly interesting structures. Yet, be it a simple stone arch or an immense and soaring span of steel, there is something about a bridge—its conquering of a barrier—that attracts the eye and lifts the spirit.

For aid in the enjoyment of seeing and knowing about bridges, one is bound to get vicarious pleasure in reading and perusing Eric DeLony's *Landmark American Bridges*, a recent publication of the American Society of Civil Engineers.

As chief of the National Park Service's HAER (Historic American Engineering Record), DeLony has been locating, listing, drawing, photographing and championing historic American bridge design and construction for two decades. As one of the nation's leading "pontists," he is, if anything, over-qualified to select and describe the true landmark bridges of America. With this volume he has done just that, and more.

The book's chronological coverage extends from the twin-arch stone Choate Bridge of colonial Massachusetts to the great modern suspension spans of New York and San Francisco. In between will be found a progression of bridges of wood, iron, steel, and concrete, with samplings of fixed, lift, swing, and bascule spans.

Pictured and described are bridges ranging from the obviously well-known (Brooklyn, Golden Gate), to the previously obscure (Stewartstown and



Oldest suspension bridge in U.S. designed by John A. Roebling, engineer for the Brooklyn Bridge, New York.

Hellertown, PA, and railroad structures of the far West). Each selected bridge is included for a good reason: to serve as a significant example (in some cases the only extant survivor) of a chapter, large or small, in the history of bridge engineering.

One cannot help but note the attrition of historic bridges. So many are gone, some even recently: victims of flood, fire, and the haste to take advantage of federal funds available for replacements, always at many times the cost of possible restoration and continued adaptive use.

Landmark American Bridges has many bright spots: bridges that have escaped the trend to "tear the old thing down," and still serve to illustrate the history of bridge design and development in the United States. The evolution of major truss types is shown, with a number of rare and unusual patents illustrated. The old, seldom-mentioned cast iron bridges of New York City's Central Park are brought to our attention, as are the beautiful concrete arches of the Oregon coast.

Throughout, the bridge illustrations, insets, and line drawings are superb, and those in color are outstanding. In addition to revealing construction details, they evoke a sense of place and season. For added cohesion, there is a well-researched "time line" running through the pages, pin-pointing significant events in bridge building and engineering history from 1570 to the present.

The key word here is found in the title. This is indeed a much-needed landmark publication.

***Reclaiming the Past: Landmarks of Women's History*, edited by Page Putnam Miller. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992. 223 pp., + index.**

Reviewed by Jannelle Warren-Findley, Arizona State University at Tempe.

Breaking new ground from a number of perspectives, a women's landmark study, *Reclaiming the Past: Landmarks of Women's History*, is just off the press. After more than a decade of calls for such a work, representatives of the National Park Service (NPS), the Organization of American Historians, and the Coordinating Committee for the Promotion of History signed a cooperative agreement in 1989 to write this work.

The cooperative agreement, as Miller notes in her important, comprehensive introduction, specifically called for a project "to broaden public support for historic preservation by involving historians and their professional organizations in the study, identification, nomination of, and the dissemination of information about, potential National Historic

Landmarks on the role of women in United States history." (p. 16) The collection, thus, is both a work of the history of women's experiences in the United States and a policy document which presents the history of a previously underrepresented group in historic preservation lists based in new social and cultural history models.

Miller's essay, which surveys the intersections between preservation theory, women's history in the United States, and American public policy relating to historic sites, sets the context and terms for the collection of essays to follow. The starting point for the work specifically can be traced to the published volumes which accompanied National Historic Landmark theme studies in the 1960s and 1970s, but Miller hopes in *Reclaiming the Past* to develop a new model to go beyond those older efforts. In carrying out Congressional wishes that the National Historic Landmark program work out "an ongoing and substantial cooperative effort with the major professional and scholarly societies" (p. 22), this study relied on specialists in women's history outside of NPS to create the historical context within which to evaluate and potentially to manage NHLs reflective of women's experiences. As Miller points out, these are pioneering essays, for little previous work has focused on the built environment of women's lives.

And like all pioneering efforts, the results from the point of view of examining the intersection of subject and object are somewhat mixed. Writing about the built environment without immediate contact with the buildings or the landscape is as difficult as writing about music without sound. Those scholars like Gail Lee Dubrow, writing on "Women and Community" and Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, writing on "Women and Education," who have actually worked with buildings as sources of historical information and insight, fare best at integrating the material culture into the historical context. Dubrow emphasizes one perspective which all the authors attempt to include by casting a wide net for community-based activities. Her flexibility of expectation leads to accounts of various racial groups that provide a model for those wishing to do other than elite, Anglo history.

Other essayists provide information about various topics from various perspectives which will be useful for workers in the field of historic preservation and cultural resource management. Barbara J. Howe defines architecture broadly to include the origins of the historic preservation movement and discussions of domestic design as well as the formal world of public and private buildings. Barbara Melosh chooses to work primarily with women in the arts whose efforts

can be examined from a feminist reinterpretation, thus (admittedly) slighting the performing arts. Buildings, sites, and landscapes related to aspects of the performing arts and the ensemble nature of much performance beg for more attention than they are given here. Joan Hoff on politics, Jean R. Soderlund on religion, and Lynn Y. Weiner on work, provide important contextual information, even when the writers' immediate sense of the everpresent built environment is less fully developed. Awareness of the complexity of social and cultural interactions and relationships in the United States shapes each essay and provides a rich and multi-layered context for site investigation and analysis. These authors broke new ground, and American history, historic preservation, and cultural studies will be the richer for it.

On the other hand, the circumstances within which the studies were made limits, to some extent, the broadest possible context for this work. Gail Dubrow recognizes the danger of doing "king and queen history" when she observes that "the ubiquitous tendency to save only historic houses associated with notable individuals obscures creative possibilities for commemorating the history of African American women at sites of their collective accomplishment and activity." (p. 95) This is true for much collective activity in all fields by women of all ethnic groups. And the tendency, even in *Reclaiming the Past*, is to document most completely the built environment that reflects individual accomplishments of notable women of each group and class.

Moreover, current policy requirements for nomination to the nation's historic lists have a tendency to favor buildings of notable architectural merit, actively discourage structures that have undergone change, and have difficulty dealing with compartmentalized or partial sites. As Dubrow notes in her essay, "Substantial tangible resources are likely to be revealed in future surveys by historic preservation planners, yet their architectural form and character may vary. Emerging scholarship on the history of women in Native American, Asian American, and Chicano/Latino communities will open other new possibilities for historic preservation...." (p. 102) The frustration of trying to account for sites of importance that were found in apartment buildings or the upstairs of social clubs, that lack architectural style or that have been altered over the years led one of my graduate students in preservation to reject the elite sound and established standards of the National Landmark Program or the National Register of Historic Places and to propose another official list to be called the National Register of Significant Stuff¹ to allow for

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their inclusion.

But even significant stuff usually has to be physically present to be accounted for in official lists. Sites without structures can sometimes qualify as landscapes, but demolition has taken a terrible toll on sites of importance to racial and ethnic groups and other outsiders in the nation's past. And many activities undertaken by women (as well as men, for that matter) took place in locations not easily categorized in official documents: kitchens, upstairs meeting rooms, upstairs floors, apartments, Sunday school rooms. These locations show up in fewer numbers in official historical nominations than their importance might indicate, and thus appear less frequently in these essays.

On the whole, however, the published results of the women's landmark study offer the field of American history and historic preservation new challenges and new perspectives. The book is simultaneously a professional, peer-reviewed history study and a policy document which proposes a new approach to history and cultural resource management in NPS and, by extension, throughout the federal government. As such, it reflects the difficulties inherent in applying new social and cultural approaches to established governmental regulations. Yet, on the whole, the study shows the really exciting insight and understanding which can be produced by the combining of sophisticated historical context and tangible resources. *Reclaiming the Past* provides a fresh, complex, multi-faceted model for theme and context studies and should receive wide attention throughout the preservation establishment.

¹ Marcia Johnston, "Historic Preservation Policy," mss, May 1993, Graduate Program in Historic Preservation, Department of History, Arizona State University.

National Archives Inventory

The National Archives has published "Records of the Office of Public Buildings and Public Parks of the National Capital" (Inventory No. 16), compiled by Mary-Jane M. Dowd. The inventory describes National Archives Record Group 42, which includes records from 1790 to 1933 relating to the creation, location, development, and early governance of the City of Washington and the District of Columbia. The inventory guides researchers to material that is rich in the history of the Federal City's formative years. Record Group 42 includes records of Presidents Washington, Adams, Jefferson, and Monroe, as well as those of later presidents. Also in the record group are letters, reports, and drawings by some of

Washington's foremost urban and park planners, architects, and sculptors, including Pierre L'Enfant, Benjamin Latrobe, Robert Mills, and Daniel Chester French.

The publication of this inventory is part of a continuing effort by the National Archives to make historical materials more widely available to the public. Copies of the inventory may be obtained at no cost by writing the National Archives, Fulfillment Branch (NEDC), Customer Service Section, 8700 Edgeworth Drive, Capitol Heights, MD 20743-3701. For further information about availability, call 800-788-6282.

Conserve O Gram Series to be Reissued

All NPS parks and centers that have responsibility for museum collections will soon be receiving the updated *Conserve O Gram* series. Produced by WASO Curatorial Services Division with the assistance of the Harpers Ferry Center Division of Conservation, the forthcoming publication is a new edition of the series that began publication in 1975. Since its beginning, the series has been a source for up-to-date technical guidance addressing a wide variety of collections management issues. Printed on bright yellow paper and named *Conserve O Gram* to depict "a quick response to what might often be emergencies," it was intended as timely, informative guidelines that applied to similar situations that curators and other collection caretakers would find in dealing with museum collections. As the series evolved, it also emerged as a valuable liaison to museums outside the NPS, and until recently was distributed free of charge through regional curators.¹

In late 1991, the *Conserve O Gram* committee was re-established to begin the process to improve the series by evaluating each of the current leaflets (89 were in print by then), selecting the issues to be revised, suggesting new topics, contacting authors, and writing and reviewing leaflets for the new series. A leaflet was dropped if its content was obsolete or if it had been incorporated into a more permanent document such as the NPS *Museum Handbook*. Another challenge that the *Conserve O Gram* committee accepted was to create a new look for the series: new colors, new masthead, column format, and new binder.

The result is a renewed series of 56 leaflets. Topics retained from the old series cover techniques and materials for

storage and exhibition of museum objects such as baskets, feathered headdresses and soft-sided hats and caps, paintings, paper objects, and rare books; curatorial health and safety updates on ethylene oxide and arsenic; information for evaluating and describing object condition, such as detection and prevention of mold and mildew; and sources of assistance including bibliographies. New topics include monitoring the museum environment with dataloggers, labeling museum objects with Acryloid B-72 lacquer, monitoring and mitigating radon from fossil vertebrates, and preserving magnetic media. Four to six additional leaflets will be published semi-annually.

Credit for the newly revised series goes to the *Conserve O Gram* committee members (Harpers Ferry Center conservators Al Levitan and Dan Riss; Regional Curator Dale Durham; Chief Curator Ann Hitchcock; and Washington Office staff curators Tony Knapp, John Hunter, Allan Montgomery and Virginia Kilby) and the many authors and reviewers who gave generously of their time throughout the 22-month-long project.

Due to the many requests from outside the NPS, Curatorial Services Division has turned to the U.S. Government Printing

Office to manage the distribution of the publication. Non-NPS readers can now obtain the *Conserve O Gram* series as a three-year subscription for \$56 (GPO List ID number COG) from the Superintendent of Documents, GPO, P.O. Box 371954, Pittsburgh, PA 15250-7954, FAX 202-512-2233.

The *Conserve O Gram* committee welcomes contributions from both NPS and non-NPS readers. These can be in the form of comments on the content or value of a particular issue; suggested topics for new issues; recommendations for authors who may have a particular expertise on a collections management topic, technique or procedure; and outlines or drafts for new leaflets. Before submitting a draft please contact Curatorial Services Division to discuss topic and required format. Send the above to Curatorial Services Division, Harpers Ferry, WV 25425, (304) 535-6410.

—Virginia Kilby
Staff Curator
Curatorial Services Division

¹ From the forthcoming administrative history, *Museum Curatorship in the National Park Service, 1904-1982* by Ralph Lewis (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office) pp. 206-207.

